

INTRODUCTION – START HERE (TAB)

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	<u>page</u>
Welcome	3
One Stop	3
<u>Services Offered at the One Stop</u>	3
<u>Location and Contact Information</u>	4
<u>Department Organizational Charts</u>	4
Purpose of this Manual	5
<u>Mission Statement</u>	5
<u>Scope</u>	5
<u>Changes and Updates</u>	5
How to Use this Manual	6
What is the UDC?	6
How does the UDC impact me?	6
How to Use the City’s Development Services Website	7
Overview for All Permits, Project Approvals, Completion and Certificates of Occupancy	8
Development and Building Permits Issued by the City of San Antonio	8
Introduction to Development	9
Performing Due Diligence	10
<u>Project Check List</u>	11

INTRODUCTION – START HERE

Welcome

If you are interested in starting a business, developing your land, constructing a building or occupying a building, you are in the right place. There are numerous rules and regulations that are designed to assist our community, insure orderly growth, protect the health, safety and character of the City. Your first contact for a development project should be the One Stop where you can obtain information and forms, ask questions and file applications for zoning, platting and building permits. You can cover a significant amount of the development process for most projects with just one call or visit. Our aim is to help you help us make San Antonio a city of choice.

One Stop

Presently, the “One Stop” consists of a counter where staff is prepared to help you with your development needs. The purpose of the “One Stop” is to simplify the construction and development application and review processes and to allow individuals to conduct most of their transactions at one location. It provides a single location where citizens, contractors and developers can obtain the information and forms necessary to pursue zoning, development, platting or construction. It is a service provided by the City of San Antonio to facilitate the development process in a customer-friendly manner.

Services Offered at the “One Stop”

The following list details what can be done through just a telephone call, a fax, an E-mail or a visit to the One Stop. If they cannot answer a question, they will refer the person you need to speak to and have them call you. The list of services offered includes:

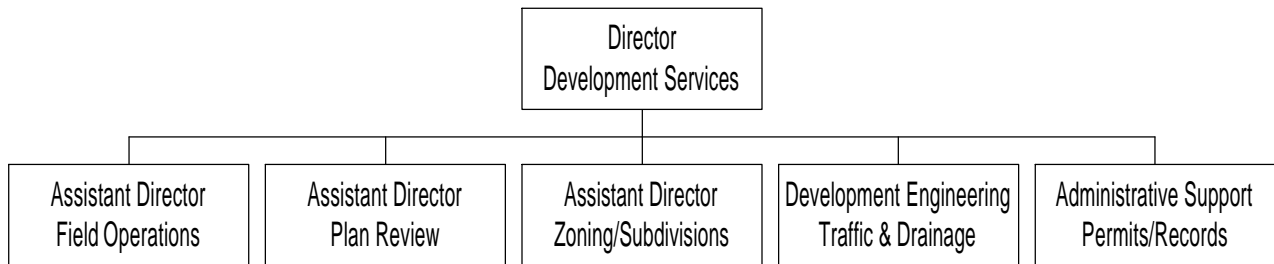
- Completeness Review for building permit and zoning applications
- Permitting
- Zoning information and applications
- Platting information and applications
- Flood Plain information
- Drainage Requirements
- Construction Codes information
- Addressing and legal description information
- Traffic Impact Analysis (T.I.A.)
- Parking Requirements
- Plan Review process information
- Minor Plan Review and approval

Location and Contact Information

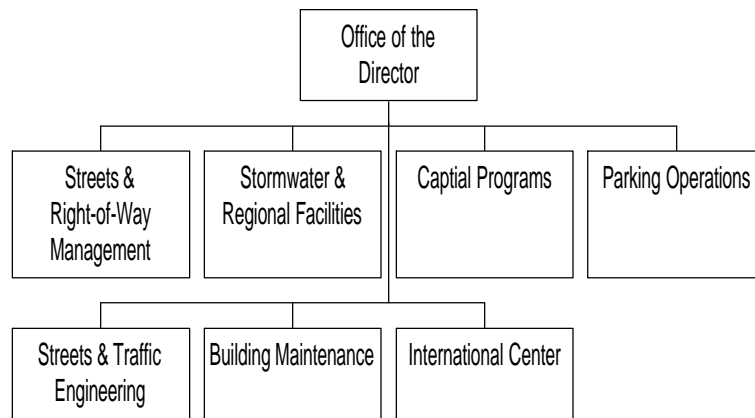
The One Stop is located in the Municipal Plaza Building at 114 W. Commerce 9th floor and can be visited in person or contacted by calling (210) 207-5500. A new 75,000 square foot office building is under construction at 1901 South Alamo Street and will be staffed by city departments involved in the development process. The new Development and Business Services Center is scheduled to open in March 2003.

ORGANIZATIONAL CHARTS OF PRINCIPAL DEPARTMENTS IN THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

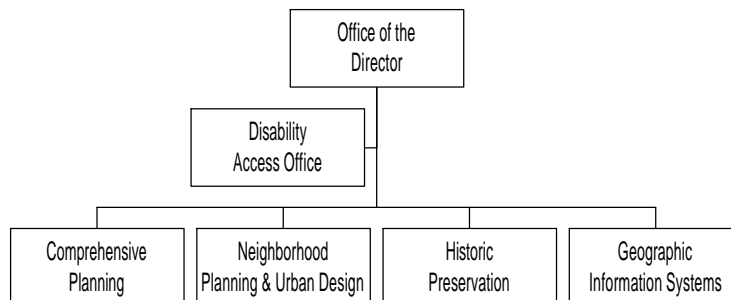
DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT



PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT



PLANNING DEPARTMENT



Purpose of this Manual

The purpose of this development process manual is contained in the title: to explain the various processes related to starting a business, land development and building construction in the City of San Antonio and its Extraterritorial Jurisdiction (ETJ). This document is intended to summarize relevant ordinance processes, but is not a substitute for the ordinances. If any conflict that arises between statements in this manual and an ordinance, the ordinance will prevail.

Scope

The intent is to provide to those involved in the development process an understanding of what is required to complete a development project regardless of size.

Development regulations affect real estate transactions, site development, permitted uses, building design, renovation, construction permitting and occupancy. If you are purchasing land, selling land, constructing a building, starting a business, repairing an existing structure or making an addition, you need to understand the current and future development options which may impact the value of your land and your ability to develop it. Many people want to know where to start and what is required. This manual is intended to answer those questions and guide you through the process.

The development process is dynamic. This manual is general in nature and reflects ordinance provisions as of December 2001, and subject to periodic revisions as needs arise.

Changes and Updates

This manual is intended to provide as much certainty and clarity as possible in the development and construction processes. Contents, policies and procedures are current as of the publication date. Any and all changes to the City's Unified Development Code (UDC) and Building Codes will be reflected in annual updates of those sections of the Manual that are impacted by the revisions. For changes occurring between updates, call or visit the One Stop.

How to use this Manual

The titles of most chapters are self-explanatory. If you know what you want to do, begin with this chapter “Start Here” and then to the next appropriate chapter as indicated on the Tabs.

- Start a Business describes the requirements for starting a new business.
- Develop or Use Your Land describes the land development process and zoning.
- Commercial Construction describes the commercial building permitting process.
- Residential Construction describes the residential building permitting process.
- Miscellaneous Permits include those issued by Public Works (barricade, right-of-way closure for special events and right-of-way closure for excavation and utility construction); Development Services (sidewalk/traffic lane closure, driveway approach, curbs & sidewalks); Fire Prevention (amusement parks, burning and bonfire, explosives & fireworks, flammables, fire alarm systems, sprinkler systems, state required inspections, storage tanks and miscellaneous permits and fees); Special Permits (water connection, temporary electrical service); Operational Permits (alcohol sales, food preparation, garage sale, single burglar alarm system); and Other Permits (fences, parking lots, swimming pools).
- Move or Demolish a Structure describes the permitting process for moving a building or demolishing a structure.
- Occupy a Building or Space describes the requirements for obtaining a certificate of occupancy as well as continuing obligations that follow occupancy of a building.
- Appeal a Decision or Action describes the process for requesting a variance to the code or appealing a decision during the process or an action taken by the Director of Development Services or other Department.

Steps for each process are included in summary form. Fee schedules are not included, but may be obtained either at the One Stop or at the City’s website: <http://www.sanantonio.gov>. Definitions are included in the Glossary and a list of Contact persons is included in the Appendix along with name, department or agency, telephone number and email address.

What is the UDC?

The San Antonio Unified Development Code (UDC), Chapter 35 of the City Code, establishes development standards, requirements, and procedures for construction and development in the City. The major purpose of the UDC is to implement the City’s adopted Master Plan. It provides clear rules about what is expected of applicants in order to gain approval to develop land in the City.

How does the UDC impact me?

For individuals, land owners, developers and builders who have their projects already approved, have a properly platted lot(s) to build on, and the proper zoning if inside the City limits, the UDC will have little immediate impact. Land outside the city limits of San Antonio but within its extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ) are also impacted, although less than land within the City limits. However, those planning a new project where approvals are not already obtained will be impacted by the UDC to varying degrees, depending on the size and location of the project and use(s) proposed. In addition to regulations in the traditional sense, the UDC now provides options to a land owner or developer regarding types of development. Additional privileges or incentives are available for certain types of projects and use patterns that directly implement Master Plan policies.

How to use the City's Development Services Website.

The City's website, sanantonio.gov is called a Community Portal and is comprehensive in scope. The website includes five major areas: Services, Living in SA, Business in SA, Government, Visiting SA and Search. The website also has headlines and links for current important news or events, links to the Mayor, your Council member, the City Manager and a Profile of San Antonio. The site has access to a keyword search engine, links to weather and air quality reports, real time traffic and emergency information.

To view maps of the City, select "Living in SA". This includes an interactive Zoning map and other maps. To find out the zoning of a parcel, make sure the "parcel" layer is active and keep zooming in until the map is large enough to see the zoning classification.

The "Services" page offers Online Citizen Service Request capabilities, with services listed from A to Z. A land owner, developer or builder might be interested in such services as: Alarm Permits, Asbestos and Demolition, Building Inspection, Building Permits, Capital Improvement Projects, Encroachments, Neighborhood Associations, Small Business Services, Street & Alley Closures or Zoning. The quickest way to go to the appropriate page is to start with the "Services" selection at the top of the Home page.

Also under "Living in SA" is the list of Neighborhood Associations that are registered with the Planning Department. This list is useful for a developer to incorporate citizen participation into the process. Other pages under Living in SA are not necessarily relevant to construction and land development.

"Business in SA" includes Economic/Business Development, Development Services, City Bid Opportunities, San Antonio Technology Accelerator Initiative (SATAI), Better Jobs Initiative, Community Revitalization Action Group (CRAG) and International ties. For land owners, developers, builders and contractors, the link to Development Services is useful. This link takes you to Building Permit information and on-line status inquiries. It also includes a link that shows the locations of Community Service Centers.

The "Government" pages have links to City Officials, City Council Agenda, City Departments, Human Resources & Jobs, City Clerk's Office, Municipal Courts and Other Public Agencies. When you click on "City Departments" you get an alphabetical listing of departments that are links to each department. Land owners, developers, builders and contractors are usually interested in Development Services, Planning and Public Works. Selecting "Development Services" from this location gives you the Department's Home Page with contact information, news, Boards & Agendas, Tools and Library.

- "Tools" include the Report System, Plan Review System, Plan Fee Calculator, Licensed Contractors and Permits & Inspections. "Licensed Contractors" allow you to search 4 different ways to find out if a contractor is licensed.
- "Permits & Inspections" is a search engine of the permits & inspections database where you can search for inspections by Permit Number; search for permits by type for a period of time, and permits by address. This generates a list of those permits.
- "Library" selection includes links to the UDC, the Landscaping Ordinance, Tree Preservation Ordinance, Online Forms, Electrical Code Chapter 10, a list of Electrical Training Providers and Fee Schedules.

If you select "Planning" in the list of department links, you get the Planning Department Home Page with links to the Director and divisions of the department: Disability Access, Historic Preservation and Design Review, Comprehensive Planning & Transportation Planning, Geographic Information Systems

and Neighborhoods & Urban Design. If your property is historic or located in a historic district you will find a map showing boundaries of historic districts, HDRC agenda, schedule of meetings, application forms and other information. Click on Comprehensive & Transportation and you will find Master PUD and MDP lists, PUD & MDP tracking, vested rights permit log, subdivision review log, development permit spreadsheet and special projects log as well as the most recent Forms & Applications, and Annexation information.

Also in the “Government/Department List,” select Public Works to go to the Home Page. This provides links to the Director, the Architect and department divisions of: Building Maintenance, Capital Projects, Parking, Right-of-Way Management, Street Maintenance, Storm Water Utility, Engineering and Traffic Engineering.

Overview of All Project Approvals, Completion and Certificates of Occupancy

1. Submit a complete application with all required information
2. A completeness review for plan submittals will be conducted to ensure that all required information is included before the time clock starts for a review.
3. Department staff and agencies review plans, materials and information submitted
4. If it is a building permit or other ministerial permit application, staff may approve or deny with feedback to applicant for changes.
5. If necessary, a public hearing will be scheduled before the Planning Commission, Zoning Commission or Historic Design Review Commission where it may be approved or denied.
6. If zoning, a public hearing may be scheduled before the City Council where it may be approved or denied.
7. Once approved by the Planning Commission, subdivision plats become eligible to be recorded at the courthouse as soon as all required fees are satisfied.
8. If a building permit, inspections will be performed by the City before a Certificate of Occupancy is issued.

Development and Building Permits Issued by the City of San Antonio

According to the UDC, a PERMIT is a license, certificate, approval, registration, consent, permit, or other form of authorization required by law, rule, regulation, order, or ordinance that a person must obtain to perform an action or initiate, continue, or complete a project for which the permit is sought. All appropriate definitions are located in the Glossary.

A DEVELOPMENT PERMIT includes any of the following: a subdivision plat, a conditional use permit, a building permit, or a certificate of occupancy. A development permit does not include a certification of completeness, a letter of certification, an amendment to the text of this Chapter, or a rezoning. Following are types of permits discussed in this Manual.

Land Development

Floodplain Development
Vested Rights
Tree Preservation

Building Permits

No Plans Permit
Commercial Construction
Electrical
Mechanical

Operational Permits

Alcohol Sales
Food Preparation
Garage Sale/Yard Sale
Single (Burglar) Alarm System

Public Works Permits

Barricade
Right of Way Closure for Special Event
Sidewalk/Traffic Lane Closure
Curbs & Sidewalks

Building Permits (continued)

Plumbing
Residential Construction
Sign

Other Permits

Moving
Demolition
Fire Prevention (too numerous to list -
See Fire Prevention Matrix on page 118)
Water Connection
Temporary (Electrical) Service
Fence
Parking Lot
Swimming Pool

Public Works Permits (continued)

Right of Way Permit

Certificate of Occupancy

Automatic Certificate of Occupancy
Prorated Certificate of Occupancy
Temporary Certificate of Occupancy
Adult Entertainment Certificate of Occupancy

Continuing Obligations

Landscaping
Tree Preservation
Special Use Permit/Conditional Zoning
Drainage
Fire Protection
Texas Accessibility Standards

Introduction to Development

The City of San Antonio corporate boundary was first established on May 25, 1838. The Town Surveyor was instructed to lay the boundaries of the City three miles (one league) north, east, south, and west of the town church (San Fernando Cathedral). At that time the City contained 36 square miles. Today, it has grown to 430 square miles. In the beginning, there were few requirements regarding land development and construction. The City adopted its first Zoning ordinance in 1938. Construction-related codes were first adopted in 1949 and the first subdivision ordinance was adopted in 1953.

Also a variety of additional requirements have been adopted by the City to include landscaping, parking, tree preservation, storm water detention, advertising signs, traffic impact analysis, and asbestos survey requirements. These new requirements were made in conjunction with new development concepts and techniques, and in response to factors such as San Antonio's Master Plan. Future requirements may cover such issues as the site grading development permit and right-of-way management as part of the overall development process.

The San Antonio development process can be very involved and complex, especially to the first time user. Depending on the type of project that you are undertaking, the process may involve a few steps requiring a day or large number of steps and sub-processes requiring months to complete. The most important part of the process is the due diligence (homework) on the part of the homeowner/land owner/developer or design consultant of the project. As you go through this manual you will begin to understand some of the logical sequencing that needs to occur. This includes such things as zoning, platting, utilities, traffic, drainage considerations and building construction, which are discussed in more detail.

This manual presents tasks in the sequence necessary if you were starting with a raw, undeveloped, improperly zoned, and improperly platted tract of land. Your project may allow you to start in the middle of the manual or towards the end if you are simply applying for a Certificate of Occupancy to occupy and use an existing building properly zoned for your specific use. Whatever your project needs may be, you should use the manual and staff resources that are available to you in the City's development related departments.

Performing Due Diligence

Any individual or company that contemplates the improvement or development of land should consider many factors before purchasing the land believed to be an ideal location for the project. Of course, research should be conducted to determine if there are such things as deed restrictions or easements that would affect the use of your land.

If the land is within the City of San Antonio corporate limits or five miles thereof, you must find out what other development requirements will affect your ability to complete your project.

- Will current zoning on the land allow the intended use?
- Will the proposed improvements fit on the land, or will it be necessary to obtain a variance from the Board of Adjustment?
- Is the land in a Historic District that will require Historic Design and Review Commission approval?
- Will the Military Airport Overlay Zone or the Edwards Aquifer Recharge Zone apply additional restrictions on uses allowed within the current Zoning District or classification?
- Is the land within the flood plain or are there other drainage problems that would interfere with your intended use?
- Will compliance with the Tree Preservation Ordinance alter your proposed project?
- Will it be necessary to file a subdivision plat before you can obtain the necessary permits to construct your improvements?

The following check list will help you evaluate the rights or entitlements of your land. This is a general checklist, for specific checklists see the chapters on Commercial Construction and Residential Construction.

Project Check List

The following are subjects that should be covered before a project goes to the drawing board. Answers to these questions before beginning a project will save the developer, owner and builder time, effort and money.

ZONING

- ☐ What is the existing zoning classification?
- ☐ What is the proposed use?
- ☐ Is approval of City Council a requirement?
A zoning change is needed if the existing zoning and the proposed use is not compatible. Contact the One Stop at 207-5500.
- ☐ Are the zoning setback requirements correct?
- ☐ If not, does justification to the Board of Adjustment for a variance exist?
Contact Board of Adjustment staff of the Development Services Department at 207-6944.

SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS

- ☐ Does the land require platting?
- ☐ Do the site plan dimensions match the plat?
- ☐ Are all easements and lot lines shown on the site plan as indicated on the plat?
- ☐ Is a copy of the recorded plat attached with the construction documents?
A copy of the recorded plat may be obtained from Plat & Deed Records located in the basement of Bexar County Courthouse at 100 Dolorosa, 335-2225. The Subdivision Section of the Development Services Department is at 207-7900. A copy may also be obtained from One Stop.

TREE PRESERVATION & LANDSCAPE ORDINANCES

- ☐ Are there existing Trees on the site that are 8" diameter or greater?
- ☐ Is there existing vegetation that can be preserved to meet tree preservation/landscape requirements?
- ☐ Submit a tree affidavit with a permit application with the appropriate documentation.
- ☐ Submit a landscape plan.
- ☐ Is an Irrigation plan required?
Contact the City Arborist in the Development Services Department at 207-8265.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

- ☐ Is the project location in a Historic District?
- ☐ Is it a designated landmark?
- ☐ Has a Certificate of Appropriateness been obtained and submitted?
The Historic Design and Review Commission (HDRC) meets on the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of each month. Contact the Historic Preservation Officer in the Planning Department, located at 114 W. Commerce, 4th floor, 207-7900.

UTILITIES

- ☐ Are utilities (electric, gas, water, sewer) available at the site?
Contacts:
City Public Service 978-2496
San Antonio Water System 704-7108
Bexar Metropolitan Water 972-9800
- ☐ If community sewer is not available, will you need a septic system?
Bexar County Public Works 335-6700

EDWARDS RECHARGE ZONE DISTRICT (ERZD)

- ☐ Is the project located in the ERZD?
- ☐ Have you obtained plat approval?
- ☐ Is City Council approval a requirement?
- ☐ Is this a Category 1,2, or 3?
- ☐ Is a water pollution abatement plan a requirement?

Contact the Aquifer Studies Office of the San Antonio Water System at 704-7305. TNRCC review may be a requirement.

DRAINAGE

- ☐ Is the land location in a floodplain?
- ☐ Is the proposal in compliance with drainage ordinance?
- ☐ Is a floodplain development permit required?

Contact Storm Water Engineering of the Development Services Department at 207-8052.

TRAFFIC IMPACT ANALYSIS (TIA)

- ☐ Does your project require a TIA? (commercial project or apartment project with more than 12 units)
- ☐ Has a TIA worksheet been prepared for your project?
- ☐ Based on the results of your TIA worksheet, is a study required?

The Development Engineering Section of the Development Services Department is at 207-2855.

CONSTRUCTION CODES

- ☐ 1997 Uniform Building Code (amended)
- ☐ 1997 Uniform Mechanical Code (amended)
- ☐ 1999 National Electrical Code (amended)
- ☐ 2000 Uniform Plumbing Code (amended)
- ☐ 1997 Uniform Fire Code (amended)
- ☐ 2000 International Energy Conservation Code
- ☐ San Antonio Pool and Spa Standards

MISCELLANEOUS

- ☐ Is the land located in the following?
 - ☐ Military Airport Overlay Zone
 - ☐ Does the height of the building violate Airport Hazard Zoning Regulations?
 - ☐ Does the land front State right-of-way?
Contact the Texas Department of Transportation for access at 615-5865.
 - ☐ Are the height, size and spacing of signs in compliance with the sign ordinance?
 - ☐ If selling of alcoholic beverages will occur, has a letter stating compliance with the distance requirements of the City and Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission (TABC) been submitted?
 - ☐ If the use is a video store, nightclub, lounge or similar use, has a letter stating whether or not it is a sexually oriented business been submitted?
 - ☐ Have Fire Flow tests been submitted with plans?
 - ☐ Have existing buildings been indicated on the site plan?
 - ☐ Is Fire Department access and Fire Department connections for sprinklers in buildings indicated on site plans?
 - ☐ Right-of-way use and excavation permits.
 - ☐ Has an asbestos survey been conducted (if addition to existing building)
 - ☐ Does the project have a Texas Department of Licensing & Regulation number (TDLR#)? (For projects of \$50,000 valuation and above.
 - ☐ Does the project comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Fair Housing Act?
Contact the Disability Access Office at 207-7957 for information.